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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000318

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH GOVERNMENT SOLICITS US OPINION ON ARMS SALES  
TO AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ

REF: PRAGUE 260

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Mark Canning for reasons 1.4  
(a) (b) (c).

1. (C) SUMMARY. THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. The Czech Republic has extensive surpluses of arms and ammunition left over from the days of the Warsaw Pact. Licensing authorities at the MFA are receiving many requests from Czech arms dealers to sell the surplus munitions to the governments in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the MFA is considering approval of such sales, it has asked the Embassy whether the U.S. has any objections; the Czechs admit they are not nearly as well equipped as the USG to assess the situation in these two countries. Two requests, refTel, are pending for Afghanistan. A new request has just been received for Iraq. If the U.S. has any objections to these proposed sales, Post would appreciate a timely response, in order, if necessary, to block the sales before they are approved. END SUMMARY

2. (C) RefTel, sent February 23, describes two license applications to sell roughly 1000 handguns to the Afghan Ministry of the Interior and 1 million rounds of ammunition to the Afghan Ministry of Defense. Since the Czech Republic has no diplomatic mission in Afghanistan, the MFA asked whether the U.S. had any information that would lead them to refuse the applications. The period during which the MFA can consider the license applications will expire March 10. The MFA could request a 30-day extension to continue gathering information relevant to the license application. However, Poloff was told that the MFA is inclined to grant the applications rather than request an extension, unless we raise significant objections.

3. (C) At a meeting on March 3, the MFA informed us of a new request which they are anticipating, but have not yet formally received. The request is to sell 21 million rounds of ammunition, to the Iraqi MOD. This transaction would be handled by a bank in Lebanon. The ammunition itself would also be shipped via Lebanon. The MFA is uncomfortable with these aspects of the transaction. More details will be shared when they become available in the formal license application. The MFA would appreciate USG views on the sale.

4. (U) Post appreciates the caution shown by the MFA and its willingness to consult with us. The surplus munitions are likely to last for years and years. Petr Kaizer, the head of the MFA's licensing office called the surplus, "a nightmare." Post feels there is considerable value in the consultations the MFA are offering. We look forward to a timely response from Washington. Minimize considered.  
HILLAS